

# Reviews of the Whitstable Report

Extracts from articles on Site-Value Rating and the Whitstable Survey which appeared in various journals.

## "WHAT BETTER ALTERNATIVE?"

—John Spencer, *Yorkshire Post*, February 21

"OF COURSE, since it is inherent in any system of site-value rating that it shall be *the owner*, in some cases landlord, in others lessee over a large number of years, and *not the occupier* who shall be liable, the rates cannot be passed on. It is possible that some cases of hardship will arise among retired people in old property on valuable sites. But sale to a developer willing to pay the rates should realise ample compensation. . . .

"When Sir Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing and Local Government, spoke on collecting betterment value released by planning decisions for the community, he was but voicing a trend. Even so, what better alternative to Socialist controls, and a bureaucratic Land Commission, than site-value rating?"

## "ANSWER TO THE RATES PROBLEM"

—Alan Grainge, *Daily Express*, February 17

"ANOTHER rates revolt this year would reinforce the argument of those who say that rates should be based on the value of the land, instead of on the rentable value of property as at present.

"More politicians, local councillors and rating experts are beginning to say that the answer to the rates problem is to make them chargeable on site values.

"Overwhelming support for this view is expected from the conclusion, published this week, of a survey carried out by the 3,000-member Rating and Valuation Association. . . .

"Rating site values — if not the complete answer — could, I believe, make a powerful contribution for a start."

## "PROGRESSIVENESS LACKING"

—Anthony Mort, *New Statesman*, February 28

"IN THE SEARCH for a new source of income two alternatives stand out: rating the site rather than the property on it or a local income tax. The former has just been studied in a pilot project at Whitstable. The report showed that, when the site alone is assessed and the owner rated, the householder's share is considerably reduced. . . . But the desired element of progressiveness would still appear to be lacking. This is a valuable piece of research and should be the basis for further work, even though it appears at the moment to be only a substitute for rating rather than an alternative." (sic)

## "SHREWDLY SOLD OFF THE PLOTS"

—Rating Correspondent, *The Municipal Journal*, February 21

"SOME will wonder how, for example, golf courses on which the present rateable value is only £500 could afford to pay rates on a site value total rateable value of over £39,000. To some it will seem that a golf course is obviously an open space, but is it not likely that many golf club committees have sought planning permission for partial development?

"Is it not probable that they have not been refused permission, but have been told that their applications are premature? Are there not examples of golf courses where the management has shrewdly sold off the plots round the perimeter for very expensive development, still retaining the essential needs of their courses? And is it not certain that many golf courses carry land greatly in excess of their needs for the game itself?

"Even if large sums of rateable value are involved for local authorities under site-value rating, it would still seem possible for statutory exemption to be accorded in those cases where the public interest requires it, such as public parks. This is not a problem of valuation but simply one of legislation."

## "DEATH BLOW TO SPECULATION"

—W. J. Cadman, *Enfield Weekly Herald*, February 28

"IT HAS to be borne in mind that under site-value rating the rate would be chargeable whether the parcel of land was fully developed, half-developed or entirely idle land. Vacant premises, now un-rated, would



An 'idle' site in Whitstable

be rated. And the justice of this seems clear.

"Every piece of land within a Council's jurisdiction enjoys to a greater or less extent the advantage of the facilities provided by the local authority — made-up roads, street lighting, drains, police protection — and a hundred-and-one other conveniences provided and maintained by the rate revenue.

"It is the expenditure of this rate revenue which largely gives rise to, and maintains, the value of land. . .

"Vacant sites will pay rates, thus encouraging quicker development and dealing the death blow to land-holding for speculation. . . . The overall effect is likely to be a quickening of all forms of useful industrial activity, including the building of more houses."

#### "POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES"

—Special Correspondent, *The Times*,  
February 21

"THE complete substitution of such a system is bound to have important repercussions on planning, development, probably on land values themselves and quite possibly on the location and re-location of industry. The political and social consequences of rating owners instead of occupiers could be very great indeed. . . .

"Site-value rating would mean an end to the survey work on buildings of all kinds and to reassessment when structural improvements and extensions are made. For that reason the cost of valuation will be considerably less than it is with the present system. . . .

"Problems there would be, but the most interesting aspect of this report is the prospect it opens up for a solution to the domestic ratepayers' problem. If the Whitstable figures are accepted as reasonably representative, at least of trends if not in detail, then the redistributive effects of site-value rating could be regarded as most appropriately weighted at the present time. . . ."

#### "FISCAL AND ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES"

—Contributed, *The Accountant*, February 29

"IT WILL readily be appreciated that S.V.R. could be used to combat land speculation. Site values will always be on the increase in a progressing economy, yet if a constant or higher rate is levied on site valuation lists, kept in line with current values by means of, say, a triennial revaluation, the increase in land values will always be channelled back to public revenue. . . .

"The Rating and Valuation Association has laudably taken the initiative of a pilot valuation in an area which seems fully to represent the various phenomena of development. It has demonstrated that S.V.R. is practicable and its fiscal and economic advantages are overwhelming. The next step must be taken by the Government: a national valuation is called for and the results compared with the present valuation lists. It is to be hoped that political interests will not again mar the introduction of such a long overdue basic fiscal and social reform."

## LAND PRICES FOR THE RECORD

### SLIDE RULE LAND VALUES

IN GUILDFORD, Surrey, a semi-detached three-bedroomed house might cost £4,300. The same house in Leatherhead would cost £4,700 to £4,800. A house that would cost £7,000 in Guildford would cost £8,000 in Leatherhead. Why? Leatherhead is nine miles nearer to London (twenty miles) than Guildford.

—from the *Evening Standard*, January 30.

### LAND VALUES IN CHELSEA

£182,000 is being asked for the freeholds of twenty-seven small cottage residences in Chelsea. The land is owned by the United Westminster Schools Foundation.

—reported in *The Times*, February 1.

### HOUSES FOR THE HOMELESS?

NOWER HILL HOUSE and its ten acres of land at Pinner, Middlesex, has been bought by London and County Real Estate Ltd. for a figure approaching £200,000. It is intended to build houses on the site, on quarter acre plots, which will sell for £15,000 to £20,000.

—from the *Evening Standard*, January 28.

### OF COURSE

TWENTY-THREE acres of land at Shenfield, Essex, has been bought by Link Homes Ltd. for £235,000. It is proposed to build four or five houses to the acre, to sell at £10,000 each—a quarter of which price, of course, will be for the land.

—reported in the *Evening Standard*, January 30.

### ST. PANCRAS—£1,000,000 FOR 11 ACRES

THE eleven acre Calthorpe London Estate in St. Pancras, producing a gross income of £41,000, has been sold to a property company for a figure in excess of one million pounds.

—from *The Daily Telegraph*, February 22.

### SURBITON—£165,000 FOR 4 ACRES

FOUR acres of land at Surbiton, Surrey, was sold in February for £165,000. Planning permission has been granted for a total of 146 dwellings.

—from *The Daily Telegraph*, February 19.

### BATTERSEA—£550,000 FOR 4 ACRES

FOUR acres of land on the river at Battersea with 125,000 square feet of building floor space was sold recently for £550,000.

Battersea Borough Council has bought half the site, which it intends to use for council housing.

—reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, February 19.